

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23) voted Wednesday to continue two important grants that will help local fire departments keep residents safe. The Fire Grants Reauthorization Grant – H.R. 3791– reauthorizes two important fire department grant programs for another five years. “Keeping our communities safe is one of our highest priorities, but our first responders can’t do that job without sufficient resources,” said Congressman Rodriguez. “These grants will ease the fiscal burden on local governments that are already stretched thin.” The bipartisan legislation, which passed the House 395 to 31, authorizes a total of \$2.2 billion a year in grants for municipalities to upgrade equipment and keep staffing at healthy levels. It also lowers the matching requirements so communities can leverage more of these funds.

The

**Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program**

was created in 2000 and has provided nearly \$5 billion directly to fire departments for equipment, training, trucks and other needs.

The

**Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Program**

, created in 2004, has provided nearly \$700 million to hire additional firefighters.

The vote Wednesday makes some changes to the way AFG monies are distributed. Currently less than 20 percent of program money goes to the most populated areas. Now, 25 percent will go to career departments, 25 percent will go to combination (career/volunteer) departments and 25 percent will go to volunteer departments. Ten percent will be competitive funding among all departments and 15 percent will fund fire prevention and safety grants and other needs.

The bill received the support of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters and the National Volunteer Fire Council.